

Lesson Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Lesson ID: 92559-44349

Title: COMMUNITY RELATIONS (COMREL) PROJECTS IN LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT (LIC)

Operation/Exercise Name: MARFOR PROMOTE LIBERTY Observed: 13 Jun 1990

Originator: COMMARFOR PANAMA

POC: LTCOL FAWCETT Commercial: (919)451-2620 DSN: 4842620

5. (U) OBSERVATION:

In a Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) environment, Community Relations (COMREL) Projects can be a great asset, in accomplishing the goals of both the specific command and higher headquarters.

6. () DISCUSSION:

7. (%) LESSON LEARNED:

In a Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) environment, Community Relations (COMREL) Projects can be a great asset, in accomplishing the goals of both the specific command and higher headquarters.

6. (U) DISCUSSION:

a. (U) One of the specific goals of the United States in its relationship with other nations is to help develop, build and support democratic political systems, free market economies, and stable social environments.

b. (U) Whenever U.S. military personnel are stationed in foreign countries, those nations sometimes perceive (or some elements within those societies wish to portray) our presence as "occupational" or "colonial" in nature -- the "Ugly American" syndrome.

c. (U) COMREL Projects have produced several benefits:

(1) (U) Needed assistance to a local community. Marine Forces Panama (MARFORPM) was able to assist with school repairs, bridge construction, recreational field renovations, etc.

(2) (U) Development and deepening of personal friendships as well as official relationship between U.S. military personnel and local nationals. This was especially important in Panama after Operation "Just Cause" to demonstrate Marines (and other troops) were not there as an occupying force, but to assist in "nation-building" activities.

(3) (U) Marines learn about the people and the conditions in other countries when they seek out and assist other people, especially those in need. It is also a "blessing" and inspirational to the Marine--They genuinely want to and feel good about helping others.

(4) (U) With good Public Affairs Office (PAO) coverage, recognition and good "press" is generated for individual Marines, the United States Marine Corps, U.S. military personnel in another nation, and U.S. foreign relationships.

7. (U) LESSONS LEARNED:

a. (U) In LIC environments, the opportunity to conduct COMREL projects is limitless as most nations have social and economic needs with which a Marine unit can assist.

b. (U) Contacts with local religious, education, business and political leaders can generate a "wish list" from the nationals of what they would like accomplished.

c. (U) There are two sensitive areas which must be monitored so that U.S. forces do not create negative results.

(1) (U) U.S. forces should not get involved or even be perceived as involved in local and/or national political issues, parties, etc. In Panama, for example, our Marine COMREL Projects tried to differentiate between repairing a government building (e.g, the mayor's office), and directly assisting the person/party currently in power (i.e., that given individual and his or her political party).

(2) (U) In the COMREL Project information gathering stage (i.e., the "wish list" from the local nationals), U.S. Personnel must tactfully not promise anything until personnel, materials, and time asset are determined. One mayor in Panama, being very honest and hopeful, produced a list of projects which

would have taken one year to accomplish. Local priorities and U.S. resources need to be matched.

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8. (U) RECOMMENDED ACTION:

a. (U) That anytime Marines are stationed in foreign countries, concentrated efforts be made early in the deployment to identify, coordinate, and accomplish COMREL Projects for that nation's people.

b. (U) That the Command Chaplain be a key leader/liaison for COMREL projects.

c. (U) That PAO news releases and coverage, both in the local press and also through U.S. media, be executed.

9. (U) COMMENTS:

None stated.

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